



VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING HEALTH STATUS



A. INFANT & CHILD HEALTH

Infant Mortality

- Implement the recommendations to reduce low birth weight rates (see opposite page), since this is a leading cause of infant mortality
- Establish a systematic review of all fetal and infant deaths to gather information for the development of preventive programs
- Carry out public and professional education on risk factors for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Encourage the cessation of smoking and avoidance of second-hand smoke during and after pregnancy
- Monitor status of pregnancy risk factors with the LOUISIANA PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT MONITORING SYSTEM (LAPRAMS) and employ this information in policy development and implementation of appropriate, effective interventions

Child Health

- Provide access to preventive health services, including health screening, immunizations, and parental education, to low income infants and children or others who lack access to such services due to geographic or financial barriers or lack of providers
- Expand health system development efforts to all areas of the state to insure that all children have access to comprehensive health (primary and specialty), mental health, social and education services

Child Abuse and Neglect

- Increase public awareness of child abuse prevention and positive parenting and promote parenting education in communities through the public health units
- Expand home visiting services to families at high risk for child abuse and neglect, utilizing the Healthy Families America Program and the Nurse Home Visiting Model

Health & Safety in Day Care Centers

- Provide expertise and leadership in the development and enhancement of child care standards
- Initiate the development of a coalition of state and local health professionals, government and community agencies, child care providers, and concerned citizens to address health and safety child care issues
- Serve as an advocate for children and child care providers
- Promote appropriate health and safety measures in child care settings
- Utilize a multi-disciplinary community approach to improve quality of these facilities
- Encourage use of child care health consultants
- Encourage health care providers to become child care health consultants
- Initiate pilot projects to incorporate on-site health services in child care settings
- Encourage/assist child care centers to integrate children with special health care needs into these facilities



Low Birthweight Rates

- Ensure access to prenatal care for all pregnant women, especially those with low incomes, teenagers, and those living in medically underserved areas
- Improve access to prenatal care by promoting and removing barriers to non-traditional obstetrical practitioners in Louisiana (i.e. nurse midwives, nurse practitioners, etc.)
- Reduce substance abuse (including use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco) among pregnant women through increased funding for public education
- Increase counseling and treatment services for substance-abusing pregnant women
- Increase personnel needed to utilize the federally-funded nutrition programs fully, including the WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN program, for pregnant women
- Improve surveillance systems to gather information on risk factors on low birth weight pregnancies
- Increase support for Partners for Healthy Babies, which promotes healthy prenatal behaviors and early prenatal care through media messages and a toll free hotline that links pregnant women with health providers
- Initiate educational programs for health providers and pregnant women on identifying the signs of premature labor
- Analyze data collected in the LOUISIANA PREGNANCY RISK ASSESSMENT MONITORING SYSTEM (LAPRAMS) database to assess preventable risk factors associated with low birth weight and to help identify effective and ineffective elements of existing efforts

Teenage Birth Rates

Facilitate the community's capacity to address teenage pregnancy through provision of information and resources. Various programs successful in reducing teenage pregnancy have accomplished some or all of the following:

- Provide educational enrichment and economic opportunities and strengthen the family
- Involve both the public and the private sectors in developing community-centered, sustainable, collaborative, and adolescent-focused programs
- Encourage age-appropriate sex and family life education at home by parents
- Provide age-appropriate sex and family life education in schools, focusing on abstinence and the delay of sexual activity
- Ensure access to information on safe sex practices and contraceptives
- Provide culturally appropriate, intensive, long-term programs that recognize family and community values
- Utilize a variety of approaches, including adult mentors, peers, and community members with similar backgrounds and experiences
- Utilize multi-disciplinary approaches: involve teachers, health professionals, social workers, and community leaders
- Develop multi-message programs addressing school drop-out, real life options, job exploration, training, placement, and individual and family counseling when necessary



- Provide comprehensive adolescent health clinics that are community-based, school-based, and/or school linked
- Ensure youth involvement in program design, implementation, and evaluation

B. INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Emerging Infections

- Encourage appropriate and judicious use of antibiotics
- Conduct surveillance activities to identify disease trends, drug resistance patterns, and risk factors for acquiring infections
- Develop appropriate statewide guidelines for the prevention, surveillance, diagnosis, treatment, and transfer of patients between health care facilities, for infection control, and for outbreak management
- Provide education and information to the public regarding newly emerging, re-emerging, and drug resistant infections, including the importance of limiting inappropriate antibiotic use

Hepatitis A

- Continue to inspect food establishments for proper sanitary procedures, including food handling, storage, preparation, and personal hygiene
- Continue to search for active cases of hepatitis A in order to identify outbreaks and provide preventive treatment
- Encourage the use of hepatitis A vaccine in specific high-risk groups, such as overseas travelers
- Provide health consultation and education to child care providers in out-of-home child care settings regarding hepatitis A, its mode of transmission, and its prevention
- Provide education and information to the public regarding hepatitis A

Hepatitis B

- Vaccinate all newborns and early adolescents to prevent hepatitis B infection
- Vaccinate high-risk group, including household contacts of hepatitis B carriers, to prevent hepatitis B infection
- Continue to search for active cases of hepatitis B to identify contacts at risk
- Provide education and information to the public concerning hepatitis B

Influenza

- Increase immunization with influenza vaccine among the high-risk groups, especially individuals over age 65 years, by increased education of health care providers and the public
- Continue active surveillance for influenza cases each year in order to inform health care providers and the public about the proper time to be immunized each fall
- Work with community groups who already reach poorly-immunized groups to increase awareness of the benefits of influenza prevention

**Tuberculosis**

- Continue the practice of directly observed therapy (DOT) to ensure completion of therapy
- Expand surveillance for TB through liaisons with hospital infection control practitioners and private medical groups in high-incidence areas
- Enhance the capacity to provide field-based outreach and ensure thorough case and contact follow-up
- Ensure that the in-patient treatment facility at Villa Feliciana remains a treatment option for drug-resistant, recalcitrant, or other TB patients who require close supervision of therapy
- Assure prompt medical assessment of those foreign-born persons entering the state with evidence of TB

Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS

- Encourage condom use among persons with more than one sexual partner
- Provide STD and HIV testing and counseling, group educational sessions, and outreach to persons at high risk for STDs and HIV/AIDS
- Increase access to clinical services for STDs to ensure rapid treatment and thereby reduce spread of STDs and vulnerability to HIV
- Increase distribution of and accessibility to condoms and needles
- Enhance partner notification activities for syphilis and HIV/AIDS
- Continue support for public awareness and professional education regarding HIV/AIDS in pregnant women and the effective use of AZT in preventing perinatal transmission

C. ORAL HEALTH

- Continue to strengthen the fluoridation program infrastructure within the OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH
- Continue to promote expansion of community water systems that adjust water fluoride level to optimal range for reduction of dental caries
- Ensure continuous proper monitoring of all public water systems that fluoridate, and provide technical assistance for all public water systems operators
- Assess utilization of dental pit and fissure sealants among third grade school children attending Louisiana public schools
- Provide education to the public and dental profession regarding current pit and fissure sealant utilization rates among populations at high risk for dental caries
- Increase access to pit and fissure dental sealants among school children in Louisiana



D. CHRONIC DISEASE

Cancer

- Advocate cessation of tobacco use
- Encourage avoidance of second-hand smoke exposure
- Promote increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, and grains and reduction of fat in diet
- Promote increased regular physical activity and maintenance of optimal weight
- Advocate routine Pap smears for women 18 and older
- Advocate mammograms at least every two years for women over 50, and for women 40-49 with a mother, sister, or child who had breast cancer
- Encourage yearly colon cancer screening tests for women and men over 50

Heart Disease/Stroke

- Advocate cessation of tobacco use
- Encourage avoidance of second-hand smoke exposure
- Promote increases in fruit, vegetable, and grain intake and reductions in fat in diet
- Promote increased regular physical activity
- Encourage maintenance of optimal weight levels
- Advocate blood pressure checks every two years
- Advocate blood cholesterol level tests every five years (if over 35)
- Support discussion of estrogen replacement therapy with a physician for post-menopausal women

Diabetes

- Advocate maintenance of optimal weight levels and physical activity
- Increase intake of fruit, vegetables, and grains while reducing fat in diet
- Promote working continuously with a physician to control blood sugar levels and monitor hemoglobin A1c through regular testing
- Encourage adoption of healthy lifestyles
- Advocate maintenance of normal blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Encourage annual retinal exams
- Promote daily inspection of feet

E. ALCOHOL, DRUG, AND OTHER ADDICTIONS

- Develop statewide, research-based prevention programs
- Maintain the sale of tobacco products to minors, through the Synar Program, at a 10% or lower non-compliance rate



- Enhance medical detoxification services
- Improve delivery system for adolescent services
- Improve Drug Court Program by integrating CRIMINAL JUSTICE and OAD resources into the delivery system
- Provide a comprehensive array of prevention and treatment services to meet the needs of problem and compulsive gamblers
- Develop recovery homes and therapeutic community models as part of the community-based treatment continuum

F. UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES

- Provide funding to expand the surveillance of non-fatal injuries through mechanisms such as Emergency Department surveillance or Emergency Medical Services data collection
- Make smoke detectors readily available to high risk populations such as the elderly and low income households
- Support the amendment to the primary seat belt enforcement law during the 1999 Louisiana legislative session
- Enact mandatory bicycle helmet legislation
- Provide support for injury prevention programs commensurate with the cost of injury – hospital care, permanent disability, and potential years of life lost

G. VIOLENT DEATHS

Violence

- Mandate systematic reporting of weapons-related injury in the state
- Finance data collection and analysis of weapons-related injury
- Educate the public regarding the need for safe firearm storage
- Educate youth regarding non-violent ways to settle disputes

Child Death

- Assist local communities throughout the state to establish child death review panels
- Provide training, consultation, and support to local panels
- Conduct training conferences for investigating agencies
- Reimburse coroners for autopsies of children
- Enhance prevention by a broader dissemination of the Child Death Review Panel's findings and the development of activities to prevent child abuse and to promote supervision of children around roadways and water, use of car safety seats and smoke detectors, and provision of safe sleeping environments for children, including putting infants to sleep on their backs



H. MENTAL HEALTH

- Decrease the stigma associated with mental illness by increasing public education efforts
- Enhance consumer and family participation in the planning, delivery, and monitoring of services and settings, especially concerning suicide issues
- Focus education efforts on the depressed consumer, impulsive adolescent, student populations, elderly, homeless, and the chronically mentally or physically ill consumer
- Treat each person served by the mental health system in a holistic manner with services tailored to meet their individual needs
- Educate and train all physicians to recognize the signs and symptoms of persons with mental illness and/or at risk for suicide, so that appropriate referrals can be made and/or intervention measures can be taken.